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TAGS: [KSCA](#) [TSPL](#) [SENV](#) [AMGT](#) [OTRA](#) [APER](#) [NZ](#)  
SUBJECT: NEW ZEALAND: PROPOSAL TO HOST SCIENCE FELLOW

REF: A. SECSTATE 30914  
[1](#)B. WELLINGTON 108  
[1](#)C. WELLINGTON 36  
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[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: As part of the 2007 Embassy Science Fellow Program, Embassy Wellington proposes to host for three months a USG scientist with research interests in biofuels and associated renewable energy technologies. Familiarity with hydrogen, geothermal and marine (wave and tidal) technologies would also be highly desirable. Having a fellow able to increase contacts with the GNZ in these areas as well as promote public understanding of the importance of US-NZ scientific cooperation would help our post meet some of its key Mission Strategic Plan goals. It would also help us make further progress under the 2002 U.S.-New Zealand bilateral climate change partnership. The GNZ would enthusiastically welcome such a fellow as well. Biofuels and bioenergy are identified as strategic priorities in the 2006 Energy Roadmap published by the New Zealand Ministry for Research, Science and Technology. These objectives are consistent with USG interests as well. End Summary.

#### Proposal: Host a USG Biofuels Scientist

[1](#)2. Embassy Wellington seeks a USG scientist with research expertise and interest in biofuels as a renewable energy technology. The Embassy envisions a three-month program based out of the Embassy some time between July and mid-December 2007. The focus of the fellow's work would be to build relationships with key GNZ ministries and Crowne Research Institutes engaged in energy and climate change science in order to identify opportunities for greater governmental and private scientific cooperation. Potential GNZ partners include the Ministry of Research, Science and Technology; Ministry for the Environment; Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry; Ministry of Economic Development; Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority, Ministry of Transport, AgResearch, Scion (forestry), and GNS Science (physical sciences).

[1](#)3. In addition to the relevant science expertise, the ideal candidate would be comfortable interacting with persons outside of the research science community, including meeting with government ministers and a broad range of public officials, academics, and journalists. US-NZ cooperation in science, especially in areas touching on environmental and climate change issues, has been a strong and enduring element in bilateral cooperation and offers significant opportunity to build public support in New Zealand for that cooperation. Public presentations and media interviews would be a core component of the program. The candidate should also anticipate some limited travel within New Zealand.

[1](#)4. (SBU) While a security clearance is not necessary for the candidate, a top secret security clearance would greatly

facilitate the successful candidate's ease of movement and integration into the Chancery office space. While a medical clearance is not necessary, the Embassy recommends that the successful candidate review insurance coverage to ensure the ability to access and pay for any necessary medical care, including coverage for any potential medical evacuation. The Embassy will provide housing, office support, in-country travel arrangements (as applicable), and other logistical support information.

¶5. (SBU) Embassy point of contact is Environment, Science, Health and Technology Officer Tod Duran. Contact details are as follows:

Office: 644-462-6043  
Fax: 644-472-3537  
Cell: 027-451-2538  
E-mail: DuranTE@state.gov

#### Background: Bilateral Science Cooperation

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¶6. (SBU) The U.S. and New Zealand have had a science and technology cooperative agreement since 1974 (renewed in 1991), but bilateral scientific efforts began well before that, including since 1957 extensive cooperation in Antarctica. Whereas other aspects of the bilateral relationship have waxed and waned over the years, bilateral scientific cooperation has remained strong and constant, and forty percent of Kiwi scientists have ties to American research. Regrettably, the New Zealand public remains largely unaware of this. As part of Mission New Zealand's ongoing efforts to improve US-NZ ties, we have made publicizing bilateral scientific efforts a key goal in our Mission Strategic Plan.

¶7. (SBU) In October 2002, the U.S. and New Zealand initiated a Bilateral Climate Change Partnership to enhance and accelerate practical cooperation on climate change issues. The initial round of 26 projects was launched in 2003 and has grown to three dozen projects in nine priority areas: climate change science, technology development, greenhouse gas accounting in forestry and agriculture, engagement with business, emissions registries, cooperation with developing countries, climate change research in Antarctica, public education initiatives, and product & process standards (Ref C). Climate change is an issue that attracts a lot of attention with the New Zealand public, whose negative opinion of U.S. policies on the issue is typically linked to our decision not to join the Kyoto Agreement.

¶8. (SBU) In January 2007, coincident with a commemoration of the 50th anniversary of U.S. - New Zealand cooperation in Antarctica, OES A/S McMurray visited New Zealand to promote and better understand the relevance of the cooperative scientific effort, both for the underlying science itself as well as for the overall bilateral relationship. Energy and climate change were principal features of the visit (Ref B). GNZ officials told A/S McMurray that formulating an effective New Zealand climate change policy is especially challenging because the country's agriculturally-based economy is both sensitive to the effects of climate change and the major contributor to New Zealand's emissions. In a welcome paradox, this same agricultural base provides a platform that New Zealand can leverage to participate in U.S. efforts to develop biofuel technologies.

#### Biofuels as a Cooperation Opportunity

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¶9. (SBU) In July 2006, the GNZ put forward an economy-wide climate change strategy to coordinate the sometimes competitive policy interests of the energy, transport and land management sectors. Energy Minister David Parker, who is also the country's Minister responsible for Climate Change Issues, provided U.S. officials with one example of how it is difficult in practice for GNZ to find the balance between these competing priorities. Citing interest by ExxonMobil and Chevron in exploring hydrocarbon development off New Zealand's southern coast, Parker admitted that this exploration would be at odds with the Government's stated

preference for renewable resources. But, he added, New Zealand has to consider all options because it will face increasing energy supply and security challenges as the country's North Island natural gas reserves wane (Ref B). In December 2006, the Ministry for Research, Science and Technology published its Energy Roadmap for Science, which identifies biofuels and bioenergy as a strategic priority for a balanced approach to address climate change while maintaining economic and energy security. In March 2007, Helen Andersen, Chief Executive of the Ministry of Research, Science and Technology told DCM David Keegan and ESTH Officer Tod Duran that GNZ would strongly support a U.S. science fellow. She particularly endorsed our proposal for a scientist with a background in biofuel technology.

Precedent: Prior Speaker Demonstrates Value

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10. (SBU) In October 2006, visiting U.S. scientist Dr. Timothy Coutts, a Research Fellow at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) in Colorado, gave a talk on solar energy at the Embassy just prior to his return to the U.S. after a two-month fellowship at Canterbury University in Christchurch. Coutts gave a fascinating overview of renewable energy issues with a focus on thin-film solar cell technology, its applications and related issues. The audience of 47 included representatives from energy-related government departments (the Ministry for the Environment and the Energy Efficiency & Conservation Authority), the trade and economics sectors (Ministry of Economic Development, Meridian Energy, Todd Energy, NZ Exchange Ltd.), and the general public with an interest in renewable energy issues. The enthusiasm demonstrated by the audience provides a strong indicator that the proposed science fellow would add real value to the Mission's efforts to sustain the global environment while promoting economic growth.  
McCormick